No Choice

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by sourweather

Summary

Hannibal and Will have a conversation on the boat to Cuba

Notes

idk this is just a short little scene I wrote in the fly I hope yall like it uwu

"I love you."

Hannibal blinks, trying to separate his thoughts enough to make sense of his surroundings. He's dazed, sedated with painkillers and dizzy with blood loss. The ship bobs on the waves, heightening his disorientation to a stomach-churning peak. As much as he wants to roll over, to peer at his traveling companion where he lies in his own bunk a few feet away, the idea of moving sounds impossible. He can't be sure if he's hallucinating, or dreaming, or just desperate beyond sanity, so he calls out into the briny air.

"Say that again," he croaks, voice like broken glass from nearly drowning only the night before.

The ship groans and Hannibal echoes the sentiment. Chiyoh is above decks, piloting them to safety. At least, he certainly hopes she's bringing them to safety. His eyes turn heavy. He's been drifting since they washed up on shore, consciousness rising and fading away like the tide. Maybe he falls asleep and wakes again, maybe he only blinks. It's impossible to say.

"I said I love you, Hannibal."

Hannibal's wax pale face splits into a sickly grin at the sound of Will's voice. He's slurring, his mouth swollen and clumsy where it's been slashed apart and stitched back together. His words can't be mistaken, though.

"...Why are you telling me now?" Hannibal asks in response.

Will manages a rough laugh, and it does more for the pain screaming through Hannibal's body than any number of drugs could. "Not disappointed, are you?"

The ceiling of their cabin— or rather the underside of the deck— swirls before Hannibal's lidded eyes. "I'd always pictured something a bit more romantic," he confesses, only half teasing. "But nothing about our relationship has ever been..." He pauses to cough, and it turns into a half-minute of unattractive wheezing and hacking that leaves him short of breath and exhausted. "...Ever been picturesque," he finishes weakly.

"Cut me some slack, doctor," Will says, and Hannibal can tell that his humor is forced. "We're dying, isn't that romantic enough?"

If Hannibal had the strength to roll his eyes, he would. "You aren't dying, Will." He doesn't care to mention his own circumstances. They both know.

"Don't tell me that," Will groans, and Hannibal breathes out a rattling chuckle. "You'll make me lose my nerve."

"You're brave in the face of death, are you?"

Will hums an affirmative sound. A roll of thunder sounds overhead. What an unwelcome surprise, perhaps the two of them will sink to their graves after all. "I'm not scared of dying," he says. "I'm not scared of you dying either, for the record."

Hannibal shuts his eyes, willing away his nausea and fatigue, and focusing instead only on Will. "Your concern for me is overwhelming," he deadpans.

"Hey, don't do that, I am concerned." His voice has gone hard, all humor leached from it. "I'm concerned that once you get your foot out of the grave I'll shy away, like I've done every time before. That's what I'm scared of."

His brows furrow, his sour throat working to swallow despite the dryness of his mouth. "The only person who can control that is you. Every time you've changed your mind, it was your choice."

"And I've decided that I'm tired of not having what I want," Will says. "I'm choosing this path, and im not letting myself turn back on it this time. That's why I'm saying it now, while I still feel like I might not get another chance. I love you. Whatever happens after this, I can't take back the fact that I love you."

A smile settles over Hannibal's features. Almost at peace. "You're finally conquering some of your trademark indescion. That's good. I love you, Will."

"I know."

Hannibal sighs. Part annoyance, part fondness, entirely devotion.

"...It's still nice, hearing you say it, though," Will admits softly. Abruptly, he clears his throat and adds "You're not dying."

No, but he's in great danger of falling asleep. "And what makes you so sure?"

Will scoffs. "Complications from a bullet wound to the gut, on a tiny ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean? That's hardly a romantic death, is it? You should've died on the cliff, now it's too late." The other bunk creaks as Will lies back. "No choice but to live."

It hurts, to laugh. Hannibal laughs regardless. Will joins him. A dark, helpless sort of laughter. "You're right, of course," he says. With great effort, he lolls his head to the side. Will Graham, his face dancing a few times over in Hannibal's vision. Bloodied and beautiful. "No choice at all."

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